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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0683  
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1989  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 9025  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 7263  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5183  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3410  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 5138  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 0012  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0673  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 4249  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 9585  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 6882  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 1344  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 3796  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000988

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

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SUBJECT: GSL RESPONSE TO REPORT MEASURED -- THUS FAR

REF: SECSTATE 109032

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia A. Butenis. REASONS: 1.4 (B, D).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The response of the Sri Lankan government (GSL) to release of the S/WCI report to Congress on incidents during the recent conflict thus far has been measured. Human Rights Minister Samarasinghe told Ambassador an "independent" committee of eminent persons would be announced next week to look into the substance of the report. Op-eds over the weekend were very critical of the report, calling into question both the U.S. right to issue such a document and its motivation. END SUMMARY.

MINISTER CALLS AMBASSADOR  
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12. (C) Ambassador and DCM were unsuccessful in hand-delivering the report to MFA or other GSL officials, per reftel instructions. Despite many repeated calls to the MFA, no official was found available to accept the report. (NOTE: EU Commissioner Bernard Savage told Ambassador that he received the same treatment when he tried to deliver the GSP-Plus report to the GSL on October 19. END NOTE.) Nevertheless, early on October 26, Minister of Disaster Relief and Human Rights Samarasinghe called Ambassador to inform her of a meeting he had just had with President Rajapaksa, at which the latter had ordered formation of a group of "eminent persons" to review the report and decide on the GSL response. In remarks to the press later in the day, Samarasinghe said the group would be an "independent committee" and that its members would be announced next week.

PRESS ON REPORT MORE PREDICTABLE  
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13. (SBU) Initial news stories of the report's release to Congress focused on the SL Foreign Ministry's and U.S. Embassy press statements. Weekend newspapers saw more in-depth coverage and analysis. Department Spokesman Ian Kelly's comments during the October 22 press briefing were carried widely. Analytical pieces were very critical.

Emblematic of the articles, the well-known and widely-published freelance opinion columnist Malinda Seneviratne criticized both the basis of the document and the sources that the State Department used in preparing the report, noting "the country with the worst human rights record over the past 100 years and especially during its post-9/11 adventures in Afghanistan and Iraq" was now asking the GSL to investigate claims of atrocities.

14. (C) The GSL was relatively tight-lipped in public about the report apart from the October 22 Ministry of Foreign Affairs press release. But Lucien Rajakarunanayake, head of the president's media unit, wrote a biting piece in the October 24 edition of the "Daily News". Rajakarunanayake claimed the report was biased and motivated by pro-LTTE groups in the United States. He wrote, "With Raj Rajaratnam already exposed, and the connections he had with the "Tamils for Clinton" and later with the "Tamils for Obama" now well known, there can (sic) be the least doubt the U.S. State Department is today leaning more in favor of the pro-LTTE Tamil groups in New York and Washington, who are no doubt good donors for campaigns and also possibly good foot soldiers for political work too." He ended by calling on other countries, especially of the third world, to establish their own tribunals for crimes against humanity, especially where the U.S. had a hand.

15. (C) COMMENT: Despite some negative op-ed press, the Sri Lankan response to the report has been relatively subdued. Thus far, there have been no demonstrations against the

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embassy nor other mass expressions of protest. Ambassador also heard very little about the report during her visit over the weekend to the provincial town of Kandy, location of Sri Lanka's major Buddhist shrines. We are guardedly encouraged by Human Rights Minister Samarasinghe's announcement that an "independent" commission would be formed to look into the substance of the report. Sri Lanka has a long history of supposedly independent commissions that ultimately proved ineffective. Thus, we will look for every opportunity to hold them to their word.  
BUTENIS